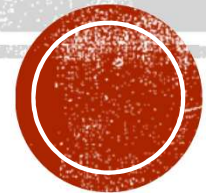


FOOD SOVEREIGNTY & PEASANT MOVEMENTS (A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE)

Dr Ujjaini Halim
IMSE, INDIA



FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

- Food sovereignty is an umbrella concept of people centered development paradigm as opposed to market and profit based exiting development paradigm.



- An Internationally accepted definition of food sovereignty is: "Food Sovereignty is the right of the people, communities and countries to define their own agricultural, labor, fishing, food and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes right to food which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies"



MOVEMENTS FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

- The challenge for food movements is to address the immediate problems of hunger, malnutrition, food insecurity and environmental degradation, while working steadily towards the structural changes needed to turn sustainable, equitable and democratic food systems into the norm rather than a collection of projects.
- This means that both reform and transformation are needed. Historically, substantive reforms have been introduced to our political and economic systems, not by the good intentions of reformists per se, but through massive social pressure on legislators—who then introduce reforms. The social pressure for system change comes from social movements.



CONTENTIONS

- The food sovereignty movement is not without contentious issues and internal disagreement (Chaifetz & Jagger, 2014; Edelman et al., 2014) For example, the distinction between food security and food sovereignty has been an area of intense scholarly argument and political conflict, but both concepts are useful in understanding, debating and devising food policies
- Early literature on food sovereignty tended not to be too critical; little attention was paid to underlying premises, policy implications or the movement's history.
- However, more recently there has been interest in critically examining the origins of the movement and the conceptual and practical challenges of implementing food sovereignty in diverse economic, ecological and political settings (Chaifetz & Jagger, 2014; Edelman et al., 2014; Fairbairn, 2012)



PEASANT ACTIVISM AND THE RISE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

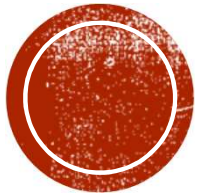
- ‘Food sovereignty’ emerged from grassroots peasant mobilizations, and has been spread globally by a democratically organized social movement.
- Peasants, defined here as smallholder producers and gatherers that make a living from the land and sea, have long faced threats to their livelihoods.
- The food crisis combined with crises of energy, environment and finance to generate a new wave of land-grabbing, as land was simultaneously demanded for agro-industrial food production, bio fuel production, conservation purposes and speculative investment (White et al., 2012)



CASE STUDIES ACROSS SOUTH ASIA: PEASANTS STRUGGLE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

- **India**
- **Bangladesh**
- **Nepal**
- **Sri Lanka**
- **Pakistan**





INDIA

- SINGUR MOVEMENT
- KISAN LONG MARCH

SINGUR – PEASANTS CREATED HISTORY

- Almost 12 years back peasants in Singur and Nandigram fought back state led drive to forcibly acquire multi cropping agricultural lands for TATA Motors and another SEZ, The land acquisition took place despite opposition from villagers from very beginning.
- They faced brutal repressions from state. A solidarity movement developed, IMSE and FIAN West Bengal were forerunners. PIL filed and the case was placed before UNHRC. Global opinion building started at macro level, while at grassroots small peasants, agriculture labourer steadily defended their right to land and food security.



SINGUR – A HISTORICAL VICTORY

- A large scale CS movement took shape and the peasant movements in West Bengal defeated the 34 years rule of left govt (which ironically came to power through another peasant movement for land reform)
- After 10 long years Supreme Court gave a verdict in favour of the peasants and the present government dismantled structures on acquired land, prepared land again for agriculture and returned the same with peasants with a compensation
- This victory of small peasant is unprecedented, where the acquired land were returned to them after 10 years battle, they are also trained in organic agriculture



THE KISAN LONG MARCH IN MAHARASHTRA

- Thousands of Adivasi farmers demanding the implementation of the Forest Rights Act of 2006 that could confer on them proper title deeds to lands their families had been cultivating for perhaps centuries. Present govt has very recently failed to defend FRA effectively in SC against a PIL, there however, was an appeal and SC rebuked the government for not presenting the case properly
- Long March of small peasants in Maharashtra covered 180 km and raised issues like indebtedness, farmers suicides, inadequate or no MSP, poor agrarian infrastructure etc. The march questioned government's agrarian policy which according to them pushing corporate agriculture and denying food sovereignty
- They were making the point that even their indebtedness was the outcome of the deliberate policies on credit followed by successive governments.



SIX DEMANDS OF LONG MARCH

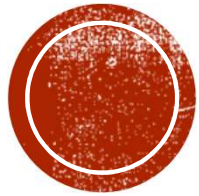
- **A complete and unconditional waiver of loans and electricity bills; All India Kisan Sabha has alleged that 1,753 debt-ridden farmers have killed themselves since June 2017**
- **Farmers demand a minimum support price of 1.5 times the input cost for farm produce**
- **Farmers want the immediate implementation of recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission, which safeguards interests of small farmers**
- **Farmers want compensation for crop losses due to unseasonal rain, hailstorm and attack by pink bollworm, in February.**
- **Farmers want the state government to stop forceful acquisition of farm lands in the name of development projects like the super highway and tracks for bullet trains."**
- **Farmers demand implementation of Forest Rights Act, which will benefit the tribal population**



LONG MARCH –IMPACT

- “The kisan march was unique in the way it was conducted with discipline, determination and a collective display of peasant power. The sight of a sea of red flags moving in a massive procession captured the attention of people everywhere and the national and regional media took this visual message to all corners of the country. Very few mass protest in recent times has had the nationwide impact as the kisan march.”
- The long march has concluded with a significant victory. The people responded with great love and appreciation for the Long March. People from the working class and the middle class – Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Dalits – welcomed the march with open arms in several localities. Hundreds of people, including youth and women in large numbers, congregated at various spots en route to felicitate the marchers
- Govt was forced to change some policies to pacify peasants. But over time when government didn't act as per promise, peasants once again organized themselves for another Long March. This time central government is forced to make promises to the farmers in line with their demands (partly)
- The solidarity of peasants and other working class people showcased brilliantly





BANGLADESH

- **Madhupur land grabbing for eco-park and peasant movements**
- **The Death of Karunamoyee Sardar in Anti-Shrimp Protest March**

DEATH OF PIREN SNAL IN ANTI ECO-PARK MOVEMENT

The government declared creation of an eco-park over 3,000 acres of land in the Madhupur region. From the very beginning of the government's pronouncement, the region's Garo indigenous populations started a resistance movement to put a halt to the government's initiative. The government's decision if implemented would have encroached upon lands which are traditionally claimed by the local indigenous communities.

The government's initiative saw little traction in the ensuing years, however, there were cases of occasional sporadic clashes between the communities and the Department of Forest, the government's agency entrusted with the establishment and maintenance of the eco park.

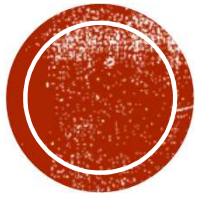
In late 2003, tension arose again at government's decision to the resumption of eco-park activities. This finally led to violent clashes with the indigenous communities on 3 January 2004 where Piren Snal died on the spot from police bullets.



THE DEATH OF KARUNAMOYEE SARDAR IN ANTI-SHRIMP PROTEST MARCH

- The death of Karunamoyee Sardar demonstrates the sacrifices of thousands of marginalized communities in the struggle against Commercial shrimp farming and where they are subjected to forcible land-gabbing. Karunamoyee Sardar was killed on 7 November, 1990 while leading a protest march against a local influential shrimp cultivator in Harinkhola village of Paikgacha upazilla 111 the South-Western Bangladesh.
- The region is situated in the coastal belt and over the past decades witnessed extensive commercial shrimp farming. This appeared as veritable curse to most of the local communities who are dependent on agriculture for livelihood. Shrimp farming leads to increased salinity in the farming areas and grabbing of more agricultural land often by deployment of thuggish methods
- These attempts of forcible land grabbing were vehemently resisted by the local communities and it is one such protest marches, Korunamoyee Sardar murdered by the hired goons of a local influential shrimp farmer. Her death led to widespread condemnation against the thuggish behaviors of the shrimp sector and globally raised awareness on the negative impacts of commercial shrimp farming. **The peasant movements were successful in resisting land grabbing in coastal belt to a great extent.**





NEPAL

From Agrarian Crises to Enshrining Food Sovereignty in the Constitution

SOME INDICATORS OF AGRARIAN/FOOD CRISES IN NEPAL

Interview taken from 50 respondents of the Rai Community (a backward community) revealed the following:

- Due to small size of land as well as practice of growing vegetables , 50% of them depend on market food for more than 6 months and their food security is severely challenged.
- Only 20% had enough food round the year.
- They expressed their opinion that there is backwardness in agricultural inputs and technology, unorganized agricultural market , lack of infrastructure and lack of access to forests and water and investible capital.
- More participation of women in agriculture work but lack of participation in decision making showed gender disparity.
- The farmers and peasants are impacted not only by the overuse of pesticides but also due to misuse and storage of pesticides.



FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ENSHRINED IN THE CONSTITUTION

- Peasant's struggle in agrarian sector was against the neoliberal trade regime and corporate control over food and agriculture. Peasants fought for Genuine Agrarian Reform
- The peasants movement embraced food sovereignty notion for the democratization of food and agriculture. In other words, the movement stressed on the need to put up mechanisms that would ensure that any step that the State would take in the food and agriculture sector is based on people's verdict in favour of people.
- After the historic political change, Nepal incorporated **food sovereignty** in its Interim Constitution in 2007. The Interim Constitution guaranteed every Nepali citizen's right to food sovereignty as a fundamental right, to be ensured in accordance with law (Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007). A Constituent Assembly wrote a new Constitution that was promulgated on 20 September 2015.

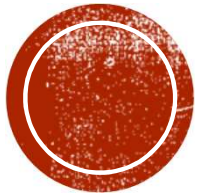


- The new Constitution also guaranteed every citizen's right to food sovereignty in the same way as the Interim Constitution. Specifically, Article 36 in Part 3 (Fundamental Rights and Duties) of the Constitution was titled 'Right relating to food', which contained three sub-Articles (The Constitution of Nepal 2015, pp. 23-4):

1. Every citizen shall have the right relating to food.
2. Every citizen shall have the right to be safe from the state of being in danger of life from the scarcity of food.
3. Every citizen shall have the right to food sovereignty in accordance with law.

In upcoming years the big challenge would be full realization of this commitment through formulation of appropriate policies and mechanisms as well as ensuring people's active participation in food governance, prioritizing people over profit (Corporate trade).





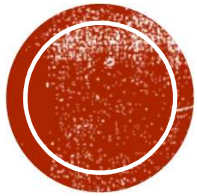
PAKISTAN

- **Struggles of tenant farmers in Okara Military Farms**

The struggles of tenant farmers in Okara Military Farms, Pakistan

- For the last 19 years, the women of Okara have fought and resisted relentlessly, along with their men, to claim the land that their forefathers have tilled for a hundred years, in the hope that some day the ownership would be transferred to them as promised by three successive heads of state.
- Several women in each village set up camp and kept vigil on the fields, lest the men in uniform appear and demand their batai (share).
- The international movement, La Via Campesina and other regional Platforms like APC, SAPC supported the Kisaan Rabita Committee Pakistan.
- In Pakistan, the Okara Military Farms tenants' struggle is actively supported by civil society, human rights defenders, the national human rights institutions, trade unions and workers' groups – and millions of silent supporters.
- Whether this support will translate into ownership of the Okara farms for the peasants, remains to be seen. The struggle continues





SRI LANKA

Land grabbing for tourism

Land grabbing for cash crop

- Lanka Board of Investment (Bol) had come to an agreement with British firm Booker Tate to invest US\$ 110 million to establish a sugar factory in Moneragala. Under this plan 65,000 acres land in Uva Province will be given to the Booker Tate for sugar cane cultivation.
- When this plan was first introduced in 2007 there was a strong protest from the farmers in the area as well as other environmental and peasant's rights groups expressing their fear of losing their farmlands as well as the destruction of forests and other natural resources with large scale monocultural sugar cane cultivation.





An International Fact Finding Mission (IFFM) with members from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand visited Kalpitiya islands from the 23rd to the 27th of February, 2011 with the objective of studying the ramifications of the Kalpitiya Integrated Tourism Resort Project.



SMALL SCALE FISHER COMMUNITIES FIGHT AGAINST LAND GRABBING OF ISLANDS OF KALPITIYA FOR TOURISM

- Kalpitiya is a peninsula and a marine sanctuary with a diversity of habitats ranging from bar reefs, flat coastal plains, saltpans, mangroves swamps, salt marshes and vast sand dune beaches. Dolphins, sea turtles and coral reefs are plentiful in the zone. With nearby attractions like Wilpattu sanctuary, a historical Dutch fort and church, St. Anne's church in Thalawila and the ancient historic city of Anuradhapura.
- Kalpitiya is home to some 65,000 people and small-scale fishing is by far the most important livelihood in the area. Fishing culture and traditions have become deeply entrenched through many generations of fishing, and the approximately 13,000 small-scale fishers – one in every five people in the area – provide vital food for almost every single family. The 14 islands have a total landmass of 1672.67 hectares (4133.19 acres). Nine islands totaling 268,94 hectares (664.28 acres) are entirely state land whereas the remaining ones have mixed ownership, public and private. The area is mostly inhabited by poor fisher families numbering 10000 or more



- According to the tourism development plan, 17 hotels with a total capacity of 5000 rooms and 10000 beds are to be built. A wide variety of tourist activities are in the offing including fishing tourism, deep sea diving, nature-based tourism, beach, sport and adventure tourism, and agro tourism.
- According to government estimates, the project will generate a total of 37500 new jobs with 15000 being direct ones and 22500 indirect.
- The private sector is heavily involved in the project with local corporations as well as multinationals being major stakeholders
- However, the FFM found that this project would destroy life of all traditional fishers and would also destroy marine ecosystem of Kalpitiya. Government promises of job creation were unfounded and nature of jobs would not accommodate project affected families, huge private investment would happen and they would be provided with huge subsidies by the state and also tax exemptions.
- All fishers came together, formed a resistance movement. But they faced wrath of government, military, police, administration. Yet they didn't give up
- Local people resisting land grabbing and fighting for **food sovereignty**



WAY FORWARD

- More awareness among commons
- Enhanced accountability of the state actors
- Civil society monitoring & reporting mechanisms
- Exposure & exchange of experiences among people's movements
- Documentation of success stories & good practices for replication
- Policy advocacy for policy revisions in line with basic tenets of food sov
- Peasant's unity/solidarity against corporate agriculture (Strengthen networking)



THANK YOU

